

Press contact

Isabelle Mathes

Phone: +49 69 8477 6567

Presse@NipponConnection.com

NipponConnection.com



Press Release, May 12, 2021

**21st Japanese Film Festival Nippon Connection –
Program for the online edition is complete!**

**June 1–6, 2021 / 80 current Japanese films as video-on-demand /
over 40 digital workshops, lectures & concerts**

Fine entertainment, food for thought, five world premieres and at least a touch of Japanese wackiness and warmth – this is what awaits the audience with around 80 **current Japanese short and feature-length films** of the 21st Nippon Connection Film Festival. After weeks of hoping and worrying, it is now certain that unfortunately the pandemic will not allow in-theater screenings in 2021 either. The **largest festival for Japanese cinema worldwide** will once again be held exclusively online from **June 1 to 6, 2021**.

All films are available online for six days **throughout Germany** and **in some cases outside of Germany**. Face-to-face talks with the filmmakers are moving into the digital realm to spark a direct exchange. For everyone whose yearning for Japan is stronger than ever, there is also **Nippon Culture**: the digital supporting program with over 40 **interactive workshops, talks, extraordinary performances and concerts**. For the first time, the **Nippon Click & Collect Kiosk** at the usual festival center in the Künstlerhaus Mousonturm in Frankfurt am Main offers festival atmosphere to go. You can order Japanese snacks, drinks, movie posters, festival goodies and more on NipponConnectionShop.de and then come pick them up throughout the festival at the Mousonturm.

The complete program as well as tickets for all films and events are available from May 22 on the website NipponConnection.com. The films can be accessed from June 1 to 6, 2021 on Watch.NipponConnection.com. One film costs 6€ and can be viewed within 24 hours of it being started.

Numerous premieres and big names

The majority of films at the 21st Nippon Connection Film Festival will have their **German, European, international or world premiere**. Ranging from family dramas and musical comedies to socially critical documentaries and independent animated films, the program is a diverse panorama of contemporary Japanese cinema.

Big names are represented this year in the **Nippon Cinema** section. Miwa Nishikawa, one of Japan's most important contemporary female directors, presents the drama **Under The Open**

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Sky, starring Nippon Honor Award winner Koji Yakusho. **The Promised Land** by Takahisa Zeze is a cleverly told mystery drama about the escalating web of relationships in a village. A nurse gets caught up in a media hunt in the thriller **A Girl Missing** by the internationally awarded Koji Fukada. **My Blood And Bones In A Flowing Galaxy** by SABU is a bloody romantic thriller about a young love in danger. Shinichiro Ueda, director of the cult hit *One Cut Of The Dead*, is represented with his twisty comedy **Special Actors**.

The Japanese family in focus

The thematic focus **Family Matters – The Japanese Family between Tradition and Modernity**, sponsored by the Kulturfonds Frankfurt RheinMain, deals with old and new concepts of family. The romantic drama **his** by Rikiya Imaizumi plays with gender norms and contrary ideas of parenthood. Masahide Ichii's tragicomedy **The Stormy Family** ruthlessly discards the family as an institution. In Kazuya Shiraishi's skillfully constructed drama **One Night**, a mother murders her violent husband and, after imprisonment and going into hiding, returns to her family fifteen years later. Hajime Tsuda weaves a kaleidoscope of memories around two girl friends and a baby in his debut feature **Daughters**. Tatsuya Yamamoto's **Nosari: Impermanent Eternity** is a thoughtful drama about a petty criminal who unexpectedly finds a surrogate family during an attempted fraud. **yes, yes, yes** by Akihiko Yano is a dense chamber play about death and the power of living on. Complementing the diverse film program, film scholars Chantal Bertalanffy and Claudia Bertolé explore family images in Japanese cinema in their online lectures.

Ten years after the triple disaster of March 11, 2011

Ten years after the devastating disaster in northeastern Japan on March 11, 2011, the effects on Japanese society are still clearly noticeable. Kaizo Hayashi's film **Bolt** tells the story of man's futile attempt to prevent the radioactive catastrophe from inside the monstrous nuclear power plant – and how things continue afterwards in the evacuation zone and in the souls of the people. In the road movie **Voices In The Wind** by Nobuhiro Suwa, a girl who lost her parents in the tsunami regains her courage to face life through a series of unexpected encounters. A panel discussion moderated by Prof. Dr. Steffi Richter (University of Leipzig) will debate the current situation in the disaster region from various perspectives.

Films about filmmaking

Tumultuous film shootings within films and a self-critical look at the film and media profession run like a thread through this year's program. Star director Sion Sono's ensemble comedy **Red Post On Escher Street** is a rollercoaster ride through the absurdities of the film business. Kiyoshi Kurosawa's poetic exploration **To The Ends Of The Earth** accompanies a young TV reporter on her trip to Uzbekistan. The documentary **Sayonara TV** by Koji Hijikata

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provides an unvarnished look behind the scenes of the Japanese media landscape and plays with the audience's expectations. In the episodic film **Kamata Prelude**, directors Ryutaro Nakagawa, Mayu Akiyama, Yuka Yasukawa and Hirobumi Watanabe provide a multi-layered commentary on being a young actress in Japan. The feel-good comedy **It's A Summer Film!** by Soshi Matsumoto plays its charms through a great protagonist who, as a director of a high-school film club, despairs when shooting her first samurai epic.

Documentary films, harsh realities and unusual perspectives

This year's **Nippon Docs** section will include the world premiere of **Ushiku**, a new documentary film by Thomas Ash, shot with a hidden camera in the deportation prison Ushiku near Tokyo. Drastic words and images show one of the country's biggest human rights scandals, which politicians keep hushing up systematically. Another world premiere will be **Ainu Neno An Ainu** by artists' collective Lunch Bee House about the indigenous Ainu population in northern Japan. **I Quit, Being "Friends"** centers around the friendship of deaf filmmaker Ayako Imamura and Ma-chan, who has Asperger Syndrome, exploring the question of how people can communicate with each other in the first place.

In the year of the Tokyo Summer Olympics, no less than three documentary films at Nippon Connection delve into the world of sports. **Koshien: Japan's Field Of Dreams** by Ema Ryan Yamazaki is about a high-school baseball tournament that stirs up emotions every year in Japan. Eiji Sakata catches a rare glimpse of the hard training and the everyday life of sumo wrestlers for his film **SUMODO ~The Successors Of Samurai~**. In his gripping documentary essay **The Witches Of The Orient**, filmmaker Julien Faraut meets members of the legendary female volleyball team that won the world championship and Olympic gold in the mid-1960s.

The **Nippon Visions** section provides a space for new talents and experimentation. In addition to short films by young filmmakers, bizarre cinematic creations are also included: The world premiere of **Extraneous Matter-Complete Edition** by Kenichi Ugana presents a laconic sci-fi-genre-mix gem about stimulating octopus-like aliens, shot in stylized black-and-white.

The precarious situation of migrant workers, as well as racism and sexism in Japanese society, is also reflected in the Nippon Visions section. Akio Fujimoto depicts the harsh reality, characterized by exploitation and powerlessness, of three young women from Vietnam in **Along The Sea**. The distressing satire **Project Tanuki** by Yu Hsin Chiueh is about a drug that finally makes people appear like "true Japanese", helping them cope with everyday life. **Company Retreat** by Atsushi Funahashi complements the current debate on sexual harassment, the abuse of power and the role of the media by adding a multi-layered Japanese perspective.

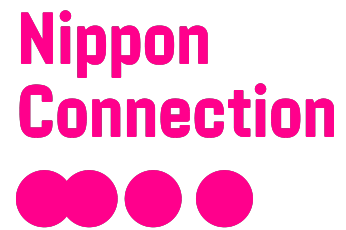
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Nippon Animation

Japanese animation films are popular around the world and are a must at every Nippon Connection Festival. This year's selection presents a varied stylistic and thematic spectrum of the art of animation. Takashi Yamazaki's 3D CGI adventure **Lupin III: The First** adds a high-polish update to the popular Lupin series. In contrast, the internationally acclaimed independent film **ON-GAKU: Our Sound** was created almost single-handedly by film newcomer Kenji Iwaisawa using rotoscoping technique. **Seven Days War** by Yuta Murano tells a strong story of youth and friendship in classic, colorful visuals. Additionally, two animation **short film programs** show the world through the eyes of young artists.

Yearning for Japan? Here comes Nippon Culture!

With **more than 40 workshops, lectures, concerts and performances**, Nippon Connection is more than just a film festival. The events in the **Nippon Culture** section hold many highlights and are available online worldwide. They will take place via Zoom and live stream. Information and registration links will be available from May 22 on the website NipponConnection.com.

With little more than light, shadows and bodies, **Kakashiza**, the Japanese **hand shadow theater** from Yokohama, creates dazzling and humorous tales. Everyone who cannot sit still in their seats after the performance of the internationally renowned theater troupe is invited to the **shadow play workshop**, where the pros will teach you your first shadow figures. Two **concerts** bring innovative and moving sounds from Japan: After their huge success at the 2020 festival edition, the duo **jujumo** is back, live with guitar and vocals from a sunset beach on Japan's southernmost island of Okinawa. The ensemble **Hogaku 2.0** combines the sound of the traditional Japanese instruments shakuhachi, tsugaru shamisen and koto with the jazzy tones of an acoustic guitar.

Interactive Japanese courses, as well as lectures on Japanese etiquette and on intercultural communication, allow participants to explore Japan's language and communication culture. In two manga drawing classes, several cooking classes, a sake tasting as well as exquisite Gin and spirits tastings, it's all about joining in and trying out.

The **Nippon Online Market** on the festival website invites its visitors to a virtual tour of scrolling and discovering. Selected exhibitors present Japanese delicacies, a special selection of music and books, as well as fashion, handmade souvenirs and more.

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Nippon Kids for young fans of Japan

Bye-bye, lockdown boredom! Online manga drawing classes, an elementary language class and a workshop for the Japanese paper theater kamishibai offer plenty of fun for the children. Young film fans can enjoy **Sumikkogurashi: Good To Be In The Corner** by **Mankyu**. In this animation film, a cute family of animals, dust particles and food leftovers falls into a fairy-tale book, tumbling from one adventure to the next.

Tickets and information are available **from May 22, 2021** on the festival website NipponConnection.com.

The festival

The Japanese Film Festival Nippon Connection is organized by the 70-member, largely voluntary, team of the **non-profit association Nippon Connection e.V.** It is under the **patronage** of Angela Dorn, Hessian Minister for Science and Art, Peter Feldmann, Lord Mayor of Frankfurt am Main, and the Consulate General of Japan in Frankfurt am Main. Nippon Connection is one of the most popular film festivals in Hesse. A **fundraising campaign** for this year's festival is currently running **on the online platform betterplace.org**: betterplace.org/en/projects/88584.

To find further information on our festival, please visit these sites:

NipponConnection.com

facebook.com/NipponConnection

twitter.com/NipponFilmfest

instagram.com/NipponConnection

blog.NipponConnection.com

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The Line-up of the 21st Nippon Connection Film Festival

June 1–6, 2021 on NipponConnection.com

All films will be shown in the original version with English subtitles except where stated otherwise.

NIPPON CINEMA

Aristocrats (Anoko wa kizoku) by Yukiko Sode, J 2020, 124 min., German premiere

Bolt by Kaizo Hayashi, J 2019, 79 min., European premiere

Can't Stop The Dancing (Dance With Me) by Shinobu Yaguchi, J 2019, 103 min.

The Day Of Destruction (Hakai no hi) by Toshiaki Toyoda, J 2020, 57 min.

Family Of Strangers (Heisa byoto sorezore no asa) by Hideyuki Hirayama, J 2019, 120 min., German premiere

A Girl Missing (Yokogao) by Koji Fukada, J/FR 2019, 111 min., German premiere

his by Rikiya Imaizumi, J 2020, 127 min., German premiere

Hit Me Anyone One More Time (Kioku ni gozaimasen!) by Koki Mitani, J 2019, 127 min., German premiere

My Blood And Bones In A Flowing Galaxy (Kudakechiru tokoro o misete ageru) by SABU, J 2019, 126 min., German premiere

One Night (Hitoyo) by Kazuya Shiraishi, J 2019, 123 min.

Our 30-Minute Sessions (Sayonara made no 30 pun) by Kentaro Hagiwara, J 2020, 114 min.

The Promised Land (Rakuen) by Takahisa Zeze, J 2019, 129 min., German premiere

Red Post On Escher Street (Escher dori no akai posuto) by Sion Sono, J 2020, 147 min.

Sea Of Revival (Nagimachi) by Kazuya Shiraishi, J 2019, 124 min., German premiere

Shiver (Senritsu seshimeyo) by Toshiaki Toyoda, J 2021, 89 min., no dialog

Special Actors by Shinichiro Ueda, J 2019, 109 min., German premiere

The Stormy Family (Taifu kazoku) by Masahide Ichii, J 2019, 108 min., European premiere

To The Ends Of The Earth (Tabi no owari sekai no hajimari) by Kiyoshi Kurosawa, J/Uzbekistan 2019, 120 min., original version with German and French subtitles

Under The Open Sky (Subarashiki sekai) by Miwa Nishikawa, J 2021, 126 min., German premiere

Voices In The Wind (Kaze no denwa) by Nobuhiro Suwa, J 2020, 139 min.

Wolf's Calling (Noroshi ga yobu) by Toshiaki Toyoda, J 2019, 16 min., no dialog, German premiere

Wonderful Paradise (Noten paradaisu) by Masashi Yamamoto, J 2020, 97 min., German premiere

Special screening: A Town And A Tall Chimney (Aru machi no takai entotsu) by Katsuya Matsumura, J 2019, 130 min., original version with German subtitles

NIPPON VISIONS

Ainu Mosir by Takeshi Fukunaga, J/US/China 2020, 84 min., German premiere

Along The Sea (Umibe no kanojotachi) by Akio Fujimoto, J/Vietnam 2020, 88 min., German premiere

Aster School Days by Mone Inada, J 2020, 38 min.

Beyond The Infinite Two Minutes (Droste no hate de bokura) by Junta Yamaguchi, J 2020, 70 min., German premiere

Birdland by Takeshi Kogahara, J 2019, 20 min., European premiere

Company Retreat (Aru shokuba) by Atsushi Funahashi, J 2020, 135 min., German premiere

Daughters by Hajime Tsuda, J 2020, 104 min., German premiere

Extraneous Matter—Complete Edition (Ibutsu -kanzenban-) by Kenichi Ugana, J 2021, 61 min., world premiere

Idol by Ryushi Lindsay, J 2020, 21 min., German premiere

I'm Really Good (Watashi wa genki) by Hirobumi Watanabe, J 2020, 61 min., German premiere

It's A Summer Film! (Sama firumu ni notte) by Soshi Matsumoto, J 2020, 97 min., international premiere

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Kamata Prelude (Kamata zensokyoku) by Ryutaro Nakagawa, Mayu Akiyama, Yuka Yasukawa & Hirobumi Watanabe, J 2020, 117 min., international premiere
Kontora by Anshul Chauhan, J 2019, 144 min., German premiere
Lucky Owl With Shimako by Yoko Kuno & Nobuhiro Yamashita, J 2020, 1 min., no dialog, German premiere
Montage Of Hong Kong by Ikuma Hori, J 2020, 28 min., European premiere
Muito Prazer by Jengil Park, J 2020, 31 min., European premiere
Nosari: Impermanent Eternity (Nosari no shima) by Tatsuya Yamamoto, J 2021, 129 min., European premiere
O-Bon, Anecdotes From Kyoto by Jénay Vogel, Schweiz 2021, 10 min., German premiere
Project TANUKI (Tanuki keikaku) by Yu Hsin Chiueh, J 2020, 41 min.
Sasaki In My Mind by Takuya Uchiyama, J 2020, 118 min., international premiere
Stay by Naoya Fujita, J 2020, 37 min., Original version with German subtitles, international premiere
Then I Add Colors To A Panda And A Zebra by Karin Takeda, J 2019, 39 min., international premiere
The Town Of Headcounts (Ninzu no machi) by Shinji Araki, J 2020, 111 min., German premiere
Weather Map by Nana Kawabata, J 2021, 9 min., no dialog, German premiere
Where Bibi Went by Tadasuke Kotani, J 2020, 15 min., German premiere
yes, yes, yes by Akihiko Yano, J 2021, 75 min., international premiere

NIPPON DOCS

Ainu Neno An Ainu by Laura Liverani, Neo Sora & Valý Þórsteinsdóttir, J 2019, 72 min., world premiere
I Quit, Being "Friends" (Tomodachi yameta.) by Ayako Imamura, J 2020, 84 min. OmeU, international premiere
Koshien: Japan's Field Of Dreams by Ema Ryan Yamazaki, J/US 2019, 94 min., German premiere
Me And The Cult Leader (Aganai – Chikatetsu sarinjiken to watashi) by Atsushi Sakahara, J 2020, 114 min., German premiere
Sayonara TV (Sayonara terebi) by Koji Hijikata, J 2019, 109 min., international premiere
SUMODO ~The Successors Of Samurai~ (Sumodo ~Samurai o tsugu mono tachi~) by Eiji Sakata, J 2020, 104 min., European premiere
Ushiku by Thomas Ash, J 2021, 84 min., world premiere
The Witches Of The Orient by Julien Faraut, Frankreich 2021, 100 min., German premiere

NIPPON ANIMATION

A Break In The Clouds by Anna Takagi, J 2021, 7 min., no dialog, German premiere
Boy With Child by Yoshiro Kawakami, J 2020, 10 min., German premiere
Castle by Ryotaro Miyajima, J 2019, 5 min., no dialog
Difference And Repetition And Coffee by Masa Kudo, J 2020, 5 min., no dialog, German premiere
Empty Hands by Emari Okayama, J 2020, 7 min., German premiere
I Am A Motif by Sijia Luo, J 2020, 8 min., German premiere
Leaking Life by Shunsaku Hayashi, J 2019, 15 min., no dialog
Locomotor by Isaku Kaneko, J 2019, 3 min., no dialog
Lupin III: The First (Lupin sansei THE FIRST) by Takashi Yamazaki, J 2019, 93 min., Original version with German subtitles, German premiere
Mubi by Tomoe Obayashi, J 2019, 6 min.
ON-GAKU: Our Sound (Ongaku) by Kenji Iwaisawa, J 2019, 71 min.
Our House / Notre maison by Caori Murata, J 2020, 3 min., German premiere
Our Little Pond by Namiko Ishidate, J 2021, 15 min., German premiere
parallax by Hayato Nove, J 2021, 33 min., no dialog, world premiere
Seven Days War (Bokura no nanokakan senso) by Yuta Murano, J 2019, 88 min., original version with German subtitles, German premiere

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Small Life by Yueqi Wu, J 2021, 5 min., German premiere

Strawberry Candy by Nianze Li, J 2020, 7 min., German premiere

Sumikkogurashi: Good To Be In The Corner (Eiga sumikko gurashi tobidasu ehon to himitsu no ko) by Mankyu, J 2019, 60 min., original version with English subtitles / original version with German voice-over

The Balloon Catcher by Isaku Kaneko, J 2020, 6 min., no dialog, German premiere

The Big Tree In Front Of The House by Yinan Liu, J 2020, 6 min., German premiere

The Living Wall by Keita Kurosaka, J 2020, 6 min., no dialog

Wandala! by Akimi Miyamoto, J 2021, 6 min., German premiere

NIPPON CULTURE

The language of each program will be stated at the event page on the website

Concerts and karaoke

Concert: jujumo / Concert: Hogaku 2.0 / DJ-Set: Nippon in the Mix with DJ neelie / Online Karaoke

Food & Drinks

Cooking class: Miso / Cooking class: Shojin / Cooking class: Taihomaki / Sake@Home / Tasting: Japanese Gin and botanical spirits / Suntory masterclass

Workshops

Kakashiza hand shadow play / Subtitling workshop / Manga drawing / Origami / JLMI online – interactive course for Japanese learners / Learning Japanese with film scenes / Japanese characters for beginners / Intercultural communication / Japanese etiquette

Performance

Kakashiza hand shadow play

Lectures and panels

Panel discussion: Triple disaster 2011 / Book presentation: No Nukes / Book presentation: Der japanische Film / Talk: Family in Haruki Murakami's works / Art Talk: Soundscape Okinawa / Lecture: Families in Koreeda's films / Lecture: Family in Japanese cinema / Lecture: Translating calligraphy / Lecture: The aesthetics of Fumito Ueda's computer games / Lecture: Sounds for the screen / Lecture: Japan's beautiful South / Nippon Game Center Talk / Film Talks

And...

Nippon Heimkino At Home / Nippon Click & Collect Kiosk / Nippon Online Market

NIPPON KIDS

Manga drawing class: Character design / Manga drawing class: Monsters and mythical creatures / Japanese for Kids / Performance & workshop: Kamishibai – Japanese paper theater

Sumikkogurashi: Good To Be In The Corner (Eiga sumikko gurashi tobidasu ehon to himitsu no ko) by Mankyu, J 2019, 60 min., original version with English subtitles / original version with German voice-over